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Kurdistan Regional Government Representative Attends Iraq Liberation Day Ceremony

WASHINGTON, April 12, 2010 – The Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq's Representative to the United States, Qubad Talabani addressed the ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery commemorating Iraq Liberation Day on Friday, April 9. Members of American and Iraqi forces, including members of the Peshmerga, attended the event, alongside veterans and family of those soldiers who have fallen in support of Iraq's freedom.

"On this day, it is appropriate and right for us to commemorate the sacrifices made to liberate Iraq from decades of brutal tyranny under Saddam Hussein," said Mr. Talabani. "So to be absolutely clear: Iraq thanks you. I thank you. And the people of Iraq's Kurdistan Region, most of all, thank you."

During the ceremony, members of American and Iraqi forces laid wreaths at the joint gravesite of fallen soldiers from the U.S. and Iraq. Ms. Hayyam Sami Mahdi Al-Shather and Ms. Debra Argel-Bastian, whose husbands are buried at the site, attended and spoke at the event. Iraqi Air force Captain Ali Abbas Rubaie, Ms. Al-Shather's deceased husband, is the only Iraqi buried at Arlington Cemetery.

Other speakers included General Nasier Arkan Abadi, Vice Chief of Staff, Iraqi Joint Forces of the Republic of Iraq; U.S. Brigadier General Judd Lyons, Adjutant General of Nebraska; and Ms. Wendy Hoffman, National President of Blue Star Mothers of America.

"Today, we must thank those who have helped us get to where we are," Mr. Talabani said. "Because although we face complicated political problems, the majority of the political forces and people who guide Iraqi society want to live in peace. They want to live up to the promise that American forces have given us."

The third annual Universal Remembrance Ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery ended with a reading of a keynote address from KRG Minister for Peshmerga Affairs by Representative Talabani.

About the Kurdistan Regional Government

The Kurdistan Region is an autonomous region in federal Iraq. With a population of currently around 4 million and rapidly increasing, the three governorates of Duhuk, Erbil and Sulaimani cover approximately 40,000 square miles. The Kurdistan Region is considered to be the safest, most stable Region in Iraq, and it is host to an ever expanding number of commercial and trade initiatives. For more information, please visit www.krg.org.

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Kurdistan Region of Iraq Lays to Rest Victims of Saddam's Anfal Campaign

CHAMCHAMAL, Iraq, April 14, 2010 – The recently recovered bodies of more than 100 children who were killed during Saddam Hussein's reign were buried Tuesday in the Kurdish town of Chamchamal.

The children had been detained in an internment campaign 1988 during a wave of arrests and attacks on the Kurds known as the "Anfal" campaign. Approximately 180,000 people died or disappeared during the campaign, in which villages were razed and civilians were executed or displaced.

As a brass band played solemnly, Peshmerga fighters buried the coffins draped with Kurdish flags in a cemetery created specifically for the ceremony. Two women were also buried.

"This is a tragic reminder of the brutality the Kurds suffered under Saddam Hussein's reign," Qubad Talabani, Kurdistan Regional Government representative to the United States said. "The children are finally getting the respect they deserve."

Over 4,000 people attended the ceremony including Barham Salih, Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, and Nechirvan Barzani, who was in attendance Representing President of the Kurdistan Region Masoud Barzani. Other Kurdish officials, foreign diplomats and family members of victims were also there.

None of the children buried in Chamchamal were identified before burial due to a lack of DNA testing equipment but will be when facilities become available, Kurdish Health Minister Taher Hawrami said.

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Kurdistan Regional Government Marks Yezidi New Year

WASHINGTON, 14 April 2010 – *The Representative of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq (KRG) to the United States today released the following statement in commemoration of Red Wednesday, the Yezidi (Ezidi) New Year:*

On behalf of the people of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, I congratulate Yezidis the world over on the Yezidi New Year, or Red Wednesday. In Yezidi tradition, today marks the day Melek Taws descended upon earth as a peacock to endow it with beauty and new life. Just like the multiform colors of the peacock's tail, the Kurdistan Region is vibrant and diverse, and the Yezidi Kurds have made an important contribution to the Region's collective culture. As a day of rebirth, I hope this Yezidi New Year brings with it greater openness and stability for all people throughout Iraq.

Yezidi Background

- The Yezidi Kurds live principally in the Dohuk and predominantly Kurdish areas of Mosul Provinces. Lalesh, the Yezidi Holy Temple is in Shexan.
- Within the Kurdistan Region, there are more than half a million Yezidis, with close to a million settled in other parts of the world.
- Throughout history, Yezidis have been an oppressed people, but possess a rich spiritual tradition that they contend is the world's oldest.
- Red Wednesday is considered to be the holiest day of the year for the Yezidi people.

About the Kurdistan Regional Government

The Kurdistan Region is an autonomous region in federal Iraq. With a population of currently around 4 million and rapidly increasing, the three governorates of Duhuk, Erbil and Sulaimani cover approximately 40,000 square miles. The Kurdistan Region is considered to be the safest, most stable Region in Iraq, and it is host to an ever expanding number of commercial and trade initiatives. For more information, please visit www.krg.org.

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STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT OF THE KURDISTAN REGION ON TERROR ATTACK

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region, (May 3, 2010) – *The Office of the President of the Kurdistan of Iraq issued the following statement regarding the attack on May 2, 2010 outside Mosul:*

It is very regrettable that civilians continue to be targeted, especially Christians in the city of Mosul by the terrorists who aim at ridding the city of its Christians to whom Mosul is their home and has been so for a very long time.

The terrorist incident of this morning against Christian students en route to school near Mosul resulted in at least one casualty and a number of injuries. The terrorists aim to disrupt the age-long diversity of Nineveh which is home to a number of different religious and ethnic groups.

We at the Kurdistan Region Presidency strongly condemn this terrorist attack on the Christian students. We also call upon all the concerned parties to work harder on finding those responsible for this cowardly act.

We wish for the wounded a speedy recovery and hereby state that the medical facilities of the Kurdistan Region are at the service of the wounded. In the wake of the terrorist attack, the Erbil Emergency Hospital received a number of wounded individuals and has prepared its facilities and staff to assist their fellow medical professionals in Mosul.

About the Kurdistan Region

The Kurdistan Region is a constitutionally recognized region in federal Iraq. With a population of over 4 million and rapidly increasing, the three governorates of Duhok, Erbil and Suleimania cover approximately 40,000 square miles. The Kurdistan Region is considered to be the safest, most stable Region in Iraq, and it is host to an ever expanding number of commercial and trade initiatives.

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U.S. House of Representatives Approves Resolution 873 Calling for the Establishment of a Consulate in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

WASHINGTON, DC—May 19, 2010—Today, the U.S. House of Representatives approved Resolution 873, calling for the establishment of a U.S. consulate in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The Resolution signifies the United States' continued support for the stability, prosperity, human rights and democracy of the Kurdistan Region, even as U.S. troops redeploy in accordance with the Status of Forces Agreement.

“I would like to thank the co-authors of the resolution and members of the Kurdish-American Congressional Caucus who supported this resolution,” said Qubad Talabani, Representative of the Kurdistan Regional Government to the United States. “The establishment of a consulate in the Kurdistan Region will broaden and deepen our already strong relationship with America.”

Currently, the Baghdad embassy is the only U.S. representation in Iraq, more than 200 miles away from the safe and secure Kurdistan Region. U.S. citizens and visitors to the Region must travel this distance to receive regular consulate services. Establishing a consulate in Erbil, the Kurdistan Region capitol, will increase travel to the Region and encourage more business investment and government and NGO missions to the area.

“I particularly want to thank the members of the Kurdish-American community who worked tirelessly to exercise their rights as American citizens to meet with and encourage members of Congress to support this resolution,” said Talabani. “Through their efforts to meet with their respective members, we as Kurds have achieved this important goal.”

The House Resolution states that the “establishment of a United States Consulate in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq will reaffirm United States support for the stability, prosperity, and democracy that the Kurdistan Region of Iraq has achieved.”

Seventeen countries, including European nations, have diplomatic representation in Erbil, and this year the U.S. Department of State altered its “Travel Advisory” for Iraq to recognize the safety and security of the Kurdistan Region.

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President Obama Visit to Kurdistan Region of Iraq Called for in Washington Post Opinion Column

Associate Editor Jim Hoagland Calls Stronger U.S. and KRG Relations

WASHINGTON, DC—August 10, 2010—In an opinion article that appeared in the Washington Post on August 8, Associate Editor Jim Hoagland notes the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) of Iraq provides a strong and balanced security position that can help achieve stability in the Middle East and also provides a strategic partnership for United States.

“Nowhere is the lack of personal dimension in U.S. diplomacy more evident than in the strategic neglect of northern Iraq's Kurds, a people Americans can proudly claim to have liberated from Saddam Hussein's genocidal fury. The gloomy government and journalistic retrospectives being churned out largely neglect the economic progress and relative political stability that the 5 million to 6 million people of Kurdistan have fashioned out of Hussein's overthrow,” he writes.

Hoagland notes, echoing KRG requests, that the U.S. establish security relations with the KRG, referring to an American preference for dealing with only centralized federal governances.

The benefits of a strong U.S.-KRG relationship extend further than increasing the Kurdistan Region's security.

“The emergence of a stable, largely detached Iraqi Kurdistan wedged between Turkey and Iran establishes a geographic belt of non-Arab Islamic leaderships who increasingly share interests. U.S. ability to influence Iran's government seems to be nonexistent, and its influence is waning in Turkey,” Hoagland writes. “It is a good time, Mr. President, to get to know the Kurds—and their ambitions. Israel and the West Bank are not the only spots in the Middle East worth a visit next year.”

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**KRG REPRESENTATIVE QUBAD TALABANI THANKS U.S. MILITARY,
RECOGNIZES STEEP COST OF WAR FOR AMERICA**

Calls for Continuing U.S. Involvement in Kurdistan Region of Iraq

WASHINGTON, DC—August 12, 2010—In an address to the World Affairs Council in Denver, Qubad Talabani, the U.S. Representative of the Kurdistan Regional Government, praised the strong strategic relationship between the United States government and the KRG, and called for continued U.S. involvement in the Kurdistan Region.

“This month, we will see the largest departure of U.S. forces since the liberation. How the U.S. leaves and remains in Iraq is crucial to the stability of the nation and the region. We hope that as the U.S. leaves militarily, it will increase its diplomatic effort. We are thrilled, for example, that the U.S. plans to open a diplomatic consulate in Erbil, following the lead of other nations.” Mr. Talabani said. “An increased U.S. diplomatic engagement in Kurdistan will cement the gains we have all made working together.”

Mr. Talabani, traveled from Washington D.C. to Colorado this week for meetings with the World Affairs Council, U.S. military leaders and Governor Bill Ritter. He also met with members of the Armed Services to personally express gratitude to them and their families for the determined battle and the sacrifices made by the American people that brought freedom and democracy to the Kurdistan Region.

Mr. Talabani attended the annual conference of the Blue Star Mothers of America, a nonpolitical organization of mothers with children currently or previously in the military and also spent time at Fort Carson with members of the Fourth Infantry Division. The Fourth Infantry Division is currently preparing for its third deployment to Iraq, this time specifically to the disputed territories and the Kurdistan Region. Talabani stressed the actions of the U.S. military will never be forgotten, and that the Kurdistan Region—where no Americans were killed in combat—is continuing the process of democracy for which the United States fought.

Speaking to the Blue Star Mothers, Talabani said, “I know what the steep cost has been to Americans, in your sons and daughters, husbands and sisters, to your national treasure and to the sharp polities it has created within this great nation. As a Kurd, however, I am thankful for what the U.S. did – it was our liberation and that of all Iraq.”

In his address to the Denver World Affairs Council, Talabani reported on the progress the Kurdistan Region has made with the help of the United States. Since the intervention of the U.S. in the 1991 Gulf War, and then the liberation of Iraq in 2003, the Kurdistan Region has remained safe and secure with increasing economic prosperity and a fast growing democratic